

Newark. In 1958, the 119th Fighter Squadron moved to the former Navy facility in Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey, and was re-designated the 119th Tactical Fighter Squadron. In 1962 the unit became the 177th Tactical Fighter Group, the 177th Fighter Interceptor Group in 1972, 177th Fighter Group in 1992, and finally became the 177th Fighter Wing in 1995. The 177th has been activated twice to federal service since World War Two. In 1961, the unit was called up for the "Berlin Crisis" and in 1968 for the "Pueblo Crisis," which sent unit members to all corners of the globe including Vietnam. Years later, 70 unit members were activated in support of "Desert Storm." As the events of September 11th unfolded the 177th, through years of preparation, training and commitment launched to our nation's emergency and desperate call for help. These Air Guard warriors brought with them the character and core values of generations of heroic citizen soldiers and airmen. Since October 2001, the Wing has had an active involvement in Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Southern Watch, Operation Northern Watch, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 177th's stated mission is "to be America's premier fighter unit, comprised of proud citizen airmen, recognized as superbly skilled and motivated, committed to unwavering service to Community, State, and Nation." In South Jersey, we know that the 177th superbly executes its mission every day. Their recognition as one of the best in the Air Force serves to confirm their excellence to the rest of the country. I am personally grateful to the 177th for its outstanding service to South Jersey, the state of New Jersey and the United States. I congratulate them on this well deserved honor.

FLORIDA: THE STATE OF
EDUCATION

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 28, 2003

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, the problems affecting public schools are all too familiar: poor academic achievement, community conflict over the curriculum, ineffective instructive methods, financial mismanagement and a growing inability to meet the needs of families. Less well known is the fact that these ills are shared by state school systems all over the world. In spite of countless reform efforts stretching back over decades, schools have yet to crack the code on educational success. Despite agreement that the system is a failure, possible solutions are a source of great controversy. In developing a strategy for change, it would be helpful to look to a model that is enjoying great success in my home state of Florida.

Florida leads the nation not only in providing education choices for children but also in innovative education opportunities for low-income families and children with disabilities. The state provides A+ scholarships for students in failing schools, McKay Scholarships for students with disabilities, tax credits for donations to scholarship organizations, and over 200 charter schools. Eligible high school students may take college courses for high school and

postsecondary credit. These scholarships redirect the flow of education funding, channeling it directly to individual families rather than to school districts allowing families to select the public or private schools of their choice and have all or part of the tuition paid. Scholarships are advocated on the grounds that parental choice and competition between public and private schools will improve education for all children.

School Vouchers known as the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) in Florida was created under Governor Bush's A+ Plan, reflects Florida's commitment to higher standards in education for Florida's students. OSP allows parents whose children are assigned to a failing school to choose between sending their child to a higher performing public school or to apply state generated funding toward private school tuition. For the purpose of OSP, a school is considered failing if it has received a failing grade in the previous year as well as one other failing grade in the three previous years.

When a parent has been notified that his or her child is eligible for the Opportunity Scholarship Program, a parent may choose one of three options. They may:

Transfer his/her child to a higher performing public school;

Enroll his/her child in a participating private school;

Retain his/her child in the low performing school.

The McKay Scholarship Program for Students with Disabilities makes a school voucher available to any special education student in Florida public schools. This program is the second largest school voucher program in the country, and with approximately 375,000 eligible special education students it is likely to become the largest soon. Currently, over 9,000 students use McKay vouchers.

In 2001, lawmakers approved the John M. McKay Scholarships for Children with Disabilities. These scholarships are available to all Florida school children who have an IEP (Individual Education Plan) and have spent at least 7 months attending special classes in the public school system.

The law allows public school children with any type of IEP disability designation (physical, emotional, mental or general learning disability), whose parents are dissatisfied with their progress in the public school, to receive a scholarship from the state. Their parents are then able to choose a school they consider to be better suited for the child. This scholarship is meant to supplement the cost of private schooling for children with disabilities, not to cover the total amount. These scholarships are not income based and follow the student through high school.

Efforts to promote educational choice are in no way a condemnation or indictment of the public school system or its teachers. The goal is simply to provide educational alternatives to a group of people who, because of financial circumstances alone, have none. Insuring quality education for all of Florida's children will help to assure a bright future for Florida. These scholarship programs are designed to liberate parents who are limited by financial circumstance, to choose the school best suited for their child's unique academic needs.

The success of school choice programs in Florida should be a lesson to us on the national level. It is only when parents are in-

volved in their child's educational life that children respond and flourish.

TRIBUTE TO SALLY KANTER

HON. ROBERT WEXLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 28, 2003

Mr. WEXLER. Mr. Speaker, last month I was truly saddened when I learned of the loss of one of South Florida's truly great political leaders and activists, a mentor to many including myself and a woman who helped shape politics in her community for the past several decades, Sally Kanter.

It is an honor and privilege to have known Sally as a long-time friend and as a staunch political activist for more than 15 years. There was no one more dedicated than Sally to the struggle of upholding democratic ideals of uplifting the less fortunate, providing for a quality education for all children, protecting the environment and a woman's right to choose and fighting for the rights of Seniors. If there was a cause to champion, Sally was the first to join the fight and the last to give up no matter what the circumstance.

It is not an exaggeration to say that a generation of democratic political leaders from West Palm Beach to Tallahassee to Washington would not be where they are today without Sally's guidance, support and political acumen. I can recall numerous times when I sought out Sally's advice on difficult issues or during troubling times. Sally was always there to provide poignant words of wisdom—her advice was readily available, honest and always to the point.

As the President of the Golden Lakes Democratic Club, Sally was an inspiration to the entire community. Small of stature but big of heart, Sally was the quintessential leader—leading by example with unrivaled passion and resoluteness. I marveled at Sally's tenacity and determination to secure everyone from Presidential candidates, Governors, Senators and Members of Congress to appear before her club. She was fervent in her beliefs, stubborn in her resolve and established a remarkable legacy of improving the lives of others. In a day and age when people make too many promises, Sally's word was as good as gold—it was always "what can I do for you" and "when do you need it done."

To Sally's family, please know I mourn with you in your loss—a loss felt throughout South Florida. Today, I wish to remember Sally for her dedication to the extraordinary tradition of *tikkun olam*—betterment of the world—through her steadfast commitment to the community at large. While she is no longer with us, her life's example forever remains.

IN RECOGNITION OF DR. JOSEPH
KORN

HON. STEPHEN F. LYNCH

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 28, 2003

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of a man whose professional life has been dedicated to finding a cause—and a